

Technophone is a real lightweight

In a technological coup of sorts, designers have created the smallest, lightest cellular phone on the market today.

The gadget, which goes by the snappy name of Technophone, is 7 inches long, 3 inches wide and about an inch thick, weighs a mere 17 ounces, and fits easily into a briefcase, purse or even the breast pocket of a jacket.

These specifications make its major competitor — the 2-pound Motorola Cellular Portable that Michael Douglas used to make a phone call from the beach in the movie "Wall Street" — bulky and obsolete.

At a suggested retail price of about \$1,800, Technophone's cost is more than double what you'd pay for the standard cellular phone you'd buy for your car.

But the cost is not exorbitant if your business purpose justifies the expense.

These phones are not numerous yet. But as they catch on, I predict more and more businesses will



Hillel Segal

take advantage of this new technology.

I used the Technophone for a month, mostly in my car, and I was very impressed with its performance. Because it is one-piece and light-

weight, it's easy to hold and easy to use. Headset and hands-free options are available.

The Technophone's reception in the car and out-of-doors was excellent. I could hear people very well, and often the person I was talking to was surprised to find out I was calling from a car phone.

But before you plunk down \$1,800 — more if you go for the options — for this nifty item, here are some disadvantages I discovered:

Because the Technophone runs on its own batteries, not off your

car's battery the way installed units work, you have to remember to turn it on and off. Who can remember to turn off a telephone? This can be a real inconvenience if you're used to a regular car phone, or you're as forgetful as I am.

The Technophone has an internal battery that's meant to be recharged, not replaced.

The standard unit comes with an AC recharger and a separate DC recharger that will work off the cigarette lighter in your car.

The charged battery has a life of one hour of continuous use, or eight hours of stand-by use. But once again, you have to remember to recharge the unit! I found that my continuous concern about the battery life was an annoying distraction.

Because it's portable and of very low wattage, the Technophone has poor reception inside buildings, especially large office buildings.

Finally, and this is a minor quibble, the flat face of the unit makes it difficult to figure out exactly

where to put your ear for maximum volume and hearing ease. I found it took a bit of practice to become comfortable with this feature.

This unit is produced by Technophone Inc., 255 Executive Drive, Plainview, N.Y. Call them at (800) 328-0585 to locate the dealer closest to you.

■ The bottom line: Despite the drawbacks, this is a remarkable technological breakthrough. It's truly the ultimate executive toy. But clearly it's good only for those who absolutely have to have a phone with them all the time. Although it may grow in popularity, for now the Technophone's high price will narrow its prospective audience.

Hillel Segal's column includes evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.